MULTI MEDIA RITUAL PERFORMANCE :

DIALOGUES BETWEEN CINEMA AND KOREAN SHAMANISM

By

(ALEX) YOUNG-HWA CHO

Major Study— Creative Writing (BA), Chung-Ang University, Korea 2003
Minor Study— Film Studies (BFA), Chung-Ang University, Korea 2003

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF APPLIED ART

in

Media Arts

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

2009

ABSTRACT

"*Mu-dang's* Cinematic Shrine" is a multimedia installation that is the result of a convergence of two different methodologies and explorations: cinema and Muism – Korean shamanism. This convergence makes apparent the recent divergence of forms and themes in my art practice since beginning my MAA Program. My thesis essay investigates three main concepts: 1. how medium and message are integrated to evoke a sense of numinosity and the liminality associated with the life-death continuum; 2. what my role is, as an artist, in creating a transformative space and language; and 3. how the space and form of my cinematic installation enhances audience interactivity, vis-à-vis the conventional cinematic apparatus.

For this inquiry, I juxtapose the role of an artist to that of a Korean shaman, a *mu-dang*. My role as a media artist mimics a *mu-dang*'s spiritual role and ability: the channeling and creation of perceptual transformation and the facilitating of alternative storytelling. This idea and practice is informed by the experimental and sociopolitical cinema of Trinh T. Minh-ha and the experimental multi-media installation, performance, and theories of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. Their theoretical investigations and writing on time, space, memory, identity, and language have influenced and inspired my own critical thinking and media production. This thesis essay intertwines their practice and theory with my own art practice in a ritualistic multi-media exploration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to acknowledge my supervisors, Peg Campbell (Associate Professor and Head, Film, Video + Integrated Media, ECU) and David Khang (Sessional Faculty, Visual Art + Material Practice, ECU) for their great amount of patience, empathy and knowledge for my personal storytelling and media experiments during the past two years. They both covered a broad range of topics and forms: from gender and ethnicity politics to media performance and innovations in the cinema apparatus. Also, for my written thesis, I am grateful to Karolle Wall (Associate Professor and Coordinator, Writing Centre, ECU) for her consistent moral support as well as her comprehensive interdisciplinary knowledge. Since my preparatory year at Emily Carr in 2006, she has been a true mentor for my English thinking and creative writing. In addition to Karolle, I have two other writing advisors for this written thesis, and they are Kathleen Oliver (ESL Coordinator at ECU) and Mark Pepevnak (Writer and Translator). They generously gave their time and effort for my happy struggles with English and Korean ways of thinking and writing. Dennis Burke (Associate Professor, Media Arts, ECU) also graciously provided a thorough review of Chapter 2, Section II – on sound – which is a central component of my thesis project and sound experiments.

I am also grateful to my many genuine collaborators who worked on my multimedia installation. Raphael Choi (BMA, Film, Video + Integrated Media, ECU/Sound Design, VFS) is my sound collaborator and without him, a prominent component of my work – the sound experiments – would have been impossible to create. My graduate program peer and former video editor, Victor Ballesteros Fuentes (MAA candidate, Media Arts, ECU) helped me a lot to keep a fresh and productive perspective in my video editing. Dr. Bruce Fulton (Associate Professor, Asian Studies, UBC) is the English translation collaborator for my

language play sound boxes, and his translation gives a unique poetic value to my poem (약손할매) and the ancient Korean poem (공무도하가). Si Nae Park (PhD candidate, Premodern Korean Literature, UBC) guided me to precious resources about the historical reading of ancient Korean literature in English.

For my media experiments, Dinka Pignon (Artist, Education Coordinator, VIVO Media Arts Centre), Brady Marks (Artist, Instructor in Pure Data Media, VIVO/MSc SFU), and Rob Symmers (Artist, Instructor in Kinetic Media, VIVO) have been my personal advisors and collaborators outside of Emily Carr. Their inspiration and conceptual and technical advice encouraged me to explore and experiment with new forms of cinema. Additionally, Sumi Kim (Designer, Industrial Design, Kookmin University/Computer System Technology, BCIT) helped with designing ideas for the new screening place, and her ability as a designer has influenced me to accommodate and negotiate my audience's spatial reception.

For my research on Korean shamanism, and anthropological and ethnographical perspectives, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Kyoung-Mann Cho (Associate Professor, Cultural Anthropology, Mokpo National University, Korea) and Dongkyu Kim (PhD, Asian Studies, UBC). I would also like to thank my friend, Jee-ho Lim (I Ching practitioner) and his mother, Ok-sung Choi (a *mu-dang*), who helped me to get through the mentally and physically difficult time working with the personal storytelling about my grandmother's shamanness. They performed *Kut* (Korean shamanic ritual) to conjure my grandmother's spirit so that I could re-connect with my grandmother and regain my confidence in telling her life story.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my grandmother, Sam-sik Kim and my mother, Yun-im Shin and their lives

Dedicated to my family and relatives who support me with their true love and compassion

Dedicated to my friends, spiritual mentors, school peers, and instructors with their genuine cares

Dedicated to Korean shamans who nurture sisterhood in Korea with their indigenous wisdom

Dedicated to all people in the world whose naming falls into the category of 'Others'

INTRODUCTION

The paths of a mu-dang *(Korean shaman)*

Prior to this thesis project, I was a documentary filmmaker in Korea. My art practice was primarily related to traditional documentary filmmaking and journalism. I worked to expose and bring to light a broad range of social issues – poverty, labour rights, sexual violence/prostitution, discrimination against women, queer, and socially-marginalized groups in Korea. Marxism, Feminism, and gender studies were the main theoretical filters, and I was more concerned with telling a 'political' cinematic story about various minority groups' plights, rather than making cinema 'politically' by recovering and representing the socially-inaudible voices of the underrepresented. Cinematic experiments in style and form were obviously less vital than the theme, the propaganda of my films.

In 2006, I moved to Canada, and this geographical migration affected my position and identity. Every day, what I saw, heard, understood, and communicated with other people needed to be negotiated in the context of the native and the foreign. My nationality, citizenship, native language (Korean), original ethnicity, and culture are constantly in need of negotiation with my status as a foreigner, my second language (English), and the multicultural ethnicities and values in Canada. In this context, the form and style, the way of communicating was more important than the theme itself; the content of communication, and language became one of the most prominent topics in my work. This is where my aspiration toward experimental cinema took a significant turn. The film apparatus, the cinematic language structure, became important in order to

convey my ideas, opinions, and values about minority groups, 'The Other'. Experimenting with a new form of cinema developed the connection where I could communicate my personal experience and my emotional response to living with a second language to people who are experiencing being in a minority position, but lack a voice.

In this context, my research project follows my personal tracing of a suppressed family history: my grandmother's lifework as a *mu-dang*, a Korean shaman. My new approach to storytelling was developed in order to make sense of my grandmother's complex otherness as a closeted *mu-dang* and addresses a cultural consciousness of spectatorship in cinema, where the personal narrative becomes collective ritual. In my installation, *Mu-dang*'s Cinematic Shrine, my grandmother's life story as a *mu-dang* is shown through several vignettes, although there is no direct reference or signifier to indicate her status as a *mu-dang*. This partial revealing allowed me to consider the conventional film and television media's caricatured representations and underrepresentation of Otherness – and how such a subject negotiates her/his being and agency.

Keeping the nature of the closeted and othered identities of *mu-dangs*, I am not overtly or literally representing the emblems of Muism.[1] However, I have chosen to portray the

[1] Some Korean anthropology scholars define Muism as a religious phenomenon that has the *mu-dang*, Korean shaman, at its core (T. Kim, 25). However, the definition of Muism is varied and still in continuous debates since Muism partly shares the concept or attributes of a religion with other so-called 'master religions' such as Christianity, Buddhism, or Muslim; however, Muism or shamanism, in general, has been notoriously difficult to define within a singular category in anthropological or ethnographical work fields (H. Kim, 10-14). This multifaceted nature of Muism, and shamanism, in general, is associated with the complex identity of my grandmother's closeted shamanhood. My grandmother, Sam-sik Kim did not want to become a *mu-dang*, yet, after several incidents,

marks and the references to the number three as that number is a vital signifier and symbol for the dialogic relationship between life and death, between the native and the foreign, and between the dominant and the subordinate. I consciously chose to use three media components: sculpture, sound and video. As I developed my project, further organizing principles were considered: triptychs, triangles, and trilogies. These mental associations inspired me to build a narrative based on three figures from three connected generations: my grandmother, my mother, and myself. My ancestral[2] lineage represents the inter-conversions and religious practices among three different spiritualities: Muism, Buddhism, and Roman Catholicism. These three spiritual practices share some symbolic similarities associated with the number three: "Samshin" (Three female divinities) in Muism, "Triple Gem" (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha) in Buddhism, "Trinity" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)in Roman Catholicism.[3]

---

she was forced to accept her shaman path (cf. Appendix I). After her initiation as a *mu-dang*, her identity and work as a shaman became an 'open secret' or 'family shame' in my family. Muism has been considered to be the 'most firmly held system of folk religious belief' in Korean history (T. Kim, 25). Ironically, being a *mu-dang* in Korea has been associated with social marginalization or conventional class stigma (Kendall, Shamans and The life). This kind of cultural and historical irony gave my grandmother the complex nature of her identity as well as a hard life. Therefore, her life story as a *mu-dang* in my work is difficult to represent simply or with a few facts that can limit understanding of all the multilayered contexts around her identity.

[2] Sam-sik Kim (February 16, 1934 - December 12, 2005) is my paternal grandmother. She was a *mu-dang* for more than 30 years, until she converted to Roman Catholicism. Her body-governed spirit was descended through my father, who could not be a shaman, himself, owing to traditionally-accepted conventions. Thus, the connection between my grandmother, my mother and me is conditioned by the patriarchal order in Korea, yet the dynamics of our agency as related women ties us together.

[3] Here is an interesting contrast which illustrates how engendered holiness manifests in different religions. In Muism, *Samshin* is associated with three grandmotherly figures which protect and nurture life, and it represents the prominent figure for traditional womanhood in Korea. It is also one of the most essential divine figures in Muism and shamanhood. This female-governed domain in the holiness of Muism contrasts with the Trinity in Roman Catholicism, in which not only the Father figure, but the Father-Son paring is central to this divine trinity. Buddhism is less explicit regarding gender

The body of my work also consists of three different media components: the physical sculpture composed of three audio components that are separated from two video projections. This multimedia installation explores the symbolic associations of the number three, and that number is ritualized in my installation. Through the three components – sculpture, audio, and video – the themes and forms of my thesis project involve dialogic and interactive relationships and originated in my thoughts on the affinities between shamanism and the cinematic apparatus: the sense of enchantment, the dream-like mediation of reality and the metaphysical, coupled with suspense/anticipation. Based on this concept, I analyze and reconstruct the architecture of the theatre space (the cinema), the content of cinema, and spectatorship. This infers the three-component relationship between the cinematographic content, the movie theatre, and spectatorship. My desire is to create a new form of cinema through the spatial- and time-based aspects of my installation, just as a shaman creates a transformative space and time through her ritual.[4]

In brief, this thesis essay outlines my intentional developments and research process on Shamanism, languages – cinematic semantics as well as Korean and English – identity politics, and the interactive discourse of Otherness. I narrate this written thesis, reflecting on the cinematic experiments in my installation, *Mu-dang*'s Cinematic Shrine and these critical experiments are grounded in the critiques of conventional film screening and film production.

---

naming; it is effectively neutral. The various images of Buddha in different Buddhist schools can be represented as both male and female. Pali *Dhamma* (Sanskrit *Dharma*), which refers to 'ultimate truth,' and *Sangha*, which identifies the monastic communities that are in service of or practicing *Dhamma*, are examples of gender flexibility.

[4] In contrast to many shamanisms including Siberian shamanism, Muism is the provenance of women and *mu-dang*s are overwhelmingly female.

THE BODY OF MEDIA RITUAL

Overall Description

As described earlier, my installation piece consists of three different components: a three channel sound work and a two channel video work with three different sculptures. These components create separate material and space for each medium: the sculpture, the sound, and the visual, and this separation allows my audience to experience the different elements of cinema individually. The sculptures reposition my audience's spectatorship from the traditional screening space (movie theatre) to a new physical space (my installation). I change the physical space and separate the audio and video outputs which are usually synchronized in traditional cinema. This separation of audio and video results in distinct, independent narratives for each medium.

The audience, with this separation between audio and video installation components, needs to choose initially between listening and watching. Based on this first choice, they must then decide which sound (among the three) and which image (between the two) they will focus upon first. After this initial appreciation of each of the different aural and visual components of the installation, the audience may want to position themselves either in synch with the sound and video or not.

There are two options that I present to my audience as a choice for the way in which they engage with the work. The audience members can choose the degree of control they may wish to exert in my installation/screening space. One may focus on the disjunction between the audio and video components. Another may synchronize the audio and video, contextualizing them within the overall installation/screening space.

In the first option, the physical separation of the audio allows audio pieces to function as three related yet independent aural sculptures, rather than being subordinate to the pictorial imagery as it often is in conventional cinema. Meanwhile the video imagery can also be seen as two separate silent film works with each of the audio and video pieces becoming mini-narratives.

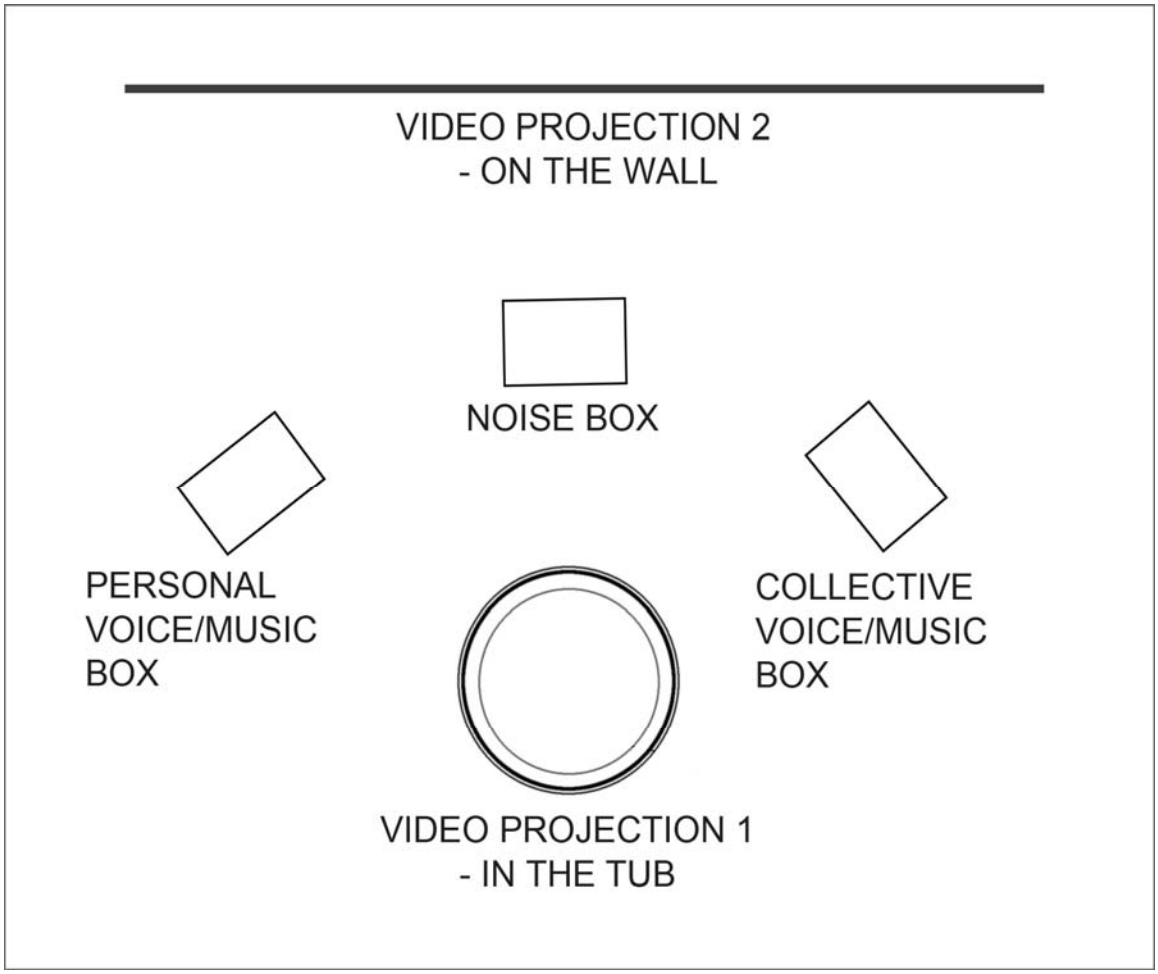
If the audience wants to choose to synchronize different visual and aural narratives, they may create their own mini-narratives by synching sound and video in different configurations. New narratives, created by the audience, can be delivered not as a filmmaker's personal creation, but as cinematic, interactive "co-creations"[5] between a filmmaker and audience.

In short, the integration of three separated elements of cinema – visual, aural and architectural – depends upon the audience's interactive choices and responses for the synchronization in a new cinematic space. This separation and integration is designed as a multi-media ritual performance.

[5] Here, I appropriate the design terminology, "co-creation" which usually includes the mutual production or inter-relational participation in problem solving led by physical interactivity between designers and users. In my own use of the term, "co-creation" does not include specific interaction that the audience can physically produce and add to my film work but refers to the change in audience perception from their choices rather than by the traditional spectacle.

I. Sculptures:

Transformative space from the personal to the public



There are three cardboard boxes in the middle of the installation space, situated in between two video projections. From a distance, various inaudible sounds emanate from the boxes. On either side of these sound boxes, are the projections. One video channel is projected down from the ceiling, as a circular image that projects onto the surface of a milk-like, opaque liquid that is contained in a rubber tub that is approximately a meter in diameter; the other video is projected onto the gallery wall as a rectangular screen several times larger than the tub.

"Introducing the performance aspect to projection is to present a possible alternative to the projected image that continues to remain flat and two-dimensional."

— Theresa Hak Kyung Cha quoted in Lewallen's The Dream of the Audience

Sculpture is foundational to every medium used in my installation. The video projections are physically manifested through three different sculptural elements: three shipping boxes for the audio work, a rubber tub as well as the liquid medium for one of the video projections. They physically reconstruct an 'unconventional' cinematic screening space. Rather than passively viewing in a traditional movie theatre, the installation design encourages the audience to physically move around the various sculptural elements. This physicality increases active participation and interactivity beyond traditional film spectatorship.

The sculptural part of my installation was produced in line with critical reading on the traditional cinema architecture and its spectatorship. While the traditional film apparatus is located in a physically crowded public space – jammed with movie-goers, it promotes a highly individualized and privatized gaze at the same time. Like Roland Barthes, I believe that we need to move away from 'cinematographic hypnosis':

> How do we enter [a movie theatre]? With one exception— a more and more frequent one, it is true— of a specific cultural quest (when a film is chosen, sought, desired, the object of a genuine anticipatory anxiety), we go to movies through sloth, out of an inclination for idleness. It is as though, before even entering the theater, the traditional prerequisites for hypnosis were met: a feeling of emptiness, idleness, inactivity […] In its human condensation, its lack of ceremony (contrary to the ritualistic "making an appearance" in the

> theater), the relaxation of postures – how many spectators slip into their seat as they slip into bed, coat and feet on the seat in front of them […] For such is the narrow space where the filmic paralysis, the cinematographic hypnosis takes place... (Barthes 1-3)

Indeed, the hypnosis is facilitated by the physical immobility of film spectators in a traditional movie theatre. Wanting to critique the traditional screening space, I have been experimenting with the production of new, alternative screening spaces.

The physicality of sculpture may lead the audience to ask questions as to the location of the rituals depicted, seen, and heard through the installation: where, when, and how these events happened, or are still happening? This type of spectatorship takes my audience away from the voyeuristic and privatized gaze of the conventional spectatorship.

This type of 'listening and watching cinema' is rooted in critical thinking about traditional film spectatorship, as well as dialogic relationships between different geographies and cultures. The overall design of my installation is imbedded with discourses between the native and the foreign, the present and the past, and the virtual and the physical. It is also contextualized between the local and the global, tensions from which are often harbored in between ethnography and anthropology. These tensions of the socio-political and geographical multiplicity are imbedded in my work as suggestive questions and negotiated gestures, rather than direct commentary.

The dynamics between national and international identity and systems are signified through the selection of installing three cardboard boxes, which encase and contain the

sound sources. On each box, two different post marks are stamped in Korean and English, with official stamps from the Korean and Canadian national postal services. The stamps mark the nation of origin and the nationalities of the shipper and receiver, but perhaps more importantly, the narratives of nationalism implicitly at work. To be specific, they signify the nationalities or nationalism of an author (myself), the audience (in Canada), and the narratives (in audio and video work). The postage stamps not only evoke a sense of travel, but they also suggest the culturally-translated and negotiated positions of diasporic existence. The gallery installation space in which this work is viewed is physically in Canada, but it is virtually overlapped by the Korean time and space that is delivered through the 'foreign' post boxes. The boxes themselves are in dialogue between different times and spaces, composing tacit questions to my audience: "Do you recognize the stories that you are hearing and seeing?" "Where do you imagine as the site, place, and time of the sounds and views before you?" "How many languages do you recognize?" These questions are connected to the language play in the sound installation, which I will discuss in chapter 2, section II.

These shipping sound boxes refer to some of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's work: sound work, mail art, and video performance. Cha's work is an essential reference to my experiments of screening space, sound work – especially language play – and new spectatorship. My art practice and theoretical explorations are significantly inflected by Cha's work regarding space, memory, identity, and language.[6] She was a Korean-born

[6] In the late 1970s, Cha was one of the leading contemporary international cinema experimentalists and performance artists. Her family fled to United States due to the civil war in South Korea during the 1950s, and many of her works stem from the theme of the Korean diaspora experience. She was murdered by a stranger in New York City in 1982, shortly after the publication of her novel Dictee. However, from 2001 to 2003, *The Dream of the Audience*, a touring exhibition organized by the Berkeley Art Museum

and American-based cinema artist, theorist, and writer. I resonate with not only her identities and life experiences as a Korean woman artist of the diaspora, but also am moved by the multi-layered nature of her work. Her work gathers the multilayered linguistic system—both in (literal and artistic)— and multiplied cultural and conceptual contexts. In her mail art work, her audience is invited into a lost space, time, history, and culture, but the invitation is subtle and poetic. The audience needs to explore the subtle and ambiguous language plays of Korean, English, and French that are delivered by mail envelopes. The messages on the inside and outside of the envelopes have evocative emotional calls for a lost time and space. They signify the emotion of cultural displacement. But it is not a fixed, singular narrative, but a continuing dialogue on the plural facets of emotions of being an 'Other' in this world. This delicate plurality and fluidity of her work unfold the transformative spaces for the audience's open senses and interpretations about being 'Others'.

Another important material and sculptural element of the installation is the bathing tub. It is a tangible, immemorial motif of my grandmother, and her closeted identity and life story as a shaman. My cousin and I video-graphed the bathing vignette in August 2005, but it becomes the present when the video is projected into the tub. The tub is filled with a milk-like, white liquid, and a video sequence of my grandmother's life and death is projected onto the opaque surface of this liquid. The white colour of the liquid enables the reflection of the video projection, while its materiality suggests meanings that are connected to the visual image that is projected onto it. The milk-like feature not

---

presented the full range of her work: performance, video, film, artists' books, mail art, works on paper and cloth. In the published book that accompanied this exhibition, Trinh T. Minh-ha and other writers in Berkeley wrote in-depth essays about Cha's multilayered and interrelated work from French film theory to Korean history. (Lewallen 33-50)

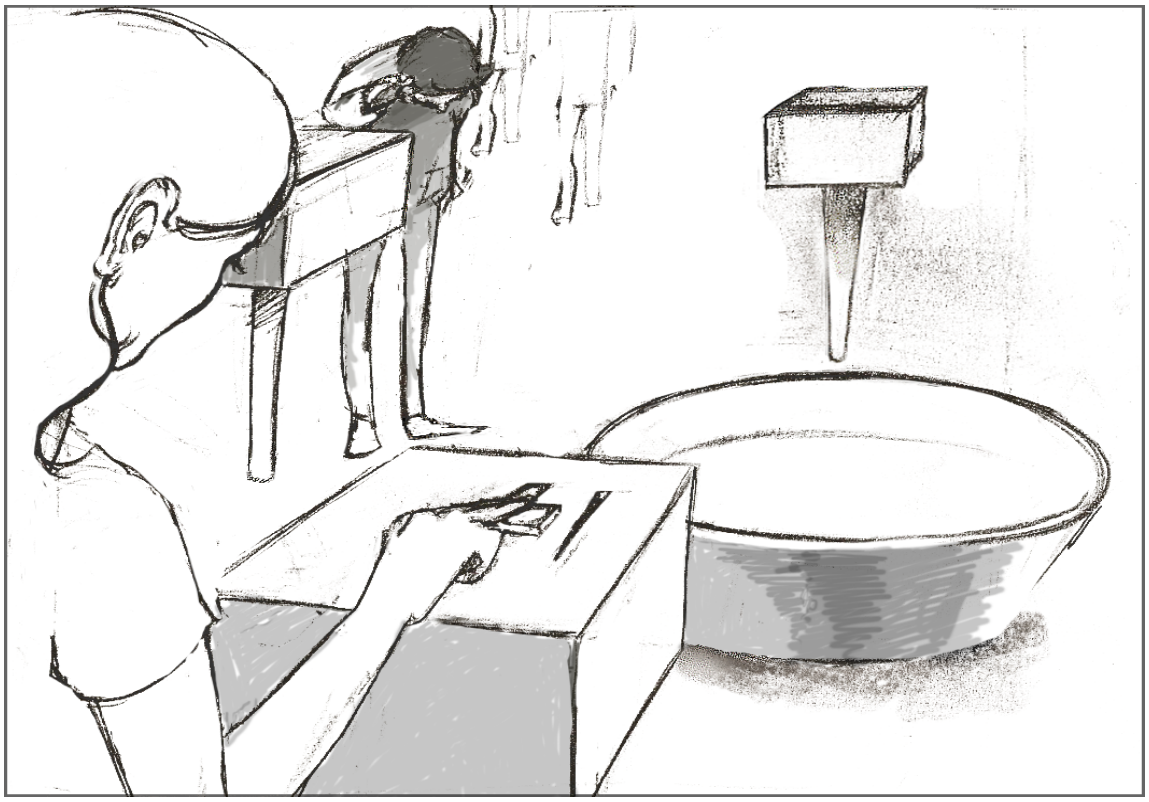
only connotes my personal shamanic inheritance from my grandmother, but it also represents the ancestral linkage between my audience and their ancestors. Most of us have been fed by either mother's milk or a processed substitute, and the symbolic use of the material implies the relationship to a person who helped us into being and who we can all archetypically call 'ancestor'. This connoted ancestral linkage is either buried in the past or carried out to the present by the choice of our remembrance. Thus the milk-like liquid in the tub serves as a trigger for the participants' own memory and becomes the agency that allows them to choose to forget or to remember.

When the video is projected on the surface of the white liquid, the rippling movement of the liquid generates blurred images. This optic quality paradoxically helps viewers to focus on the shaky, handheld video images and enhances the dreamy quality of remembering. The liquid in the tub literally has a depth to it, and the fluctuating hand-held video imagery that is projected onto the liquid surface seems to enhance this sense of depth. This lively dream-like visual quality intends to evoke a sense of liminality[7] and to mitigate the traumatic visual scenes that juxtapose the life and death of my grandmother. (Cf. p. 34)

[7] My understanding of the concept of liminality is based on the work of Victor Turner, who considers it to be 'a marginal, transitional, ambiguous state.' Cf. "The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. [...] Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon." (Turner 95)

II. Sounds:

Subversive noises and voices



As the audience approaches, they soon realize that the different ambiguous sounds they hear emanate from three cardboard shipping boxes with Korean postage. Once the audience members bend to get closer to the boxes, they can better hear the separate audio pieces: 'A Noise Flow,' 'A Personal Voice/Music Box,' and 'A Collective Voice/Music Box.' The audience may vary the levels of the sound mixing faders on the latter two boxes, which control Korean and English language outputs/levels.

"Speech…creates a bond of coming-and-going which generates movement and rhythm…life and action."
– A Hampate Ba quoted in Minh-ha's Woman, Native, and Other

In attempts to embody a way of critically engaging with film theory and praxis in my own art practice, I have built a sound installation which is physically separated from the visual. I push further the avant-garde notions of the disjunctive and autonomous position of the film sound track through a sculptural reconstruction of filmic sound and image.

As I described in the section on sculptures, my sound work is situated inside three cardboard shipping boxes, and the audience listens from three different sound sources. This sound design is an attempt to experiment and to reevaluate on the relationship between sound and visual. Although different kinds of film sound sources generate various types of information as sound narratives by themselves, they are mostly considered "secondary information" to confirm or to reinforce what we see in film. For example, the dialogue or speech of actors or interviewees are considered "more direct" sound information than other sound sources such as room tone sound or incidentally recorded sound. The economy of constructing sound information is based on the subordinated position of sound to visual in film production and reproduction. In mainstream films the hierarchal value system between visual and sound is intensified by not only filmmakers' image dominant filmmaking but also audience's visual oriented reception. I am conscious about this subjugation of sound to image in the film apparatus as a metaphor of "Others." The awareness on the ubiquitous presence of film sound remains on a subconscious or unconscious level like a haunting ghost as "Others", the

minority groups in our society become invisible and unvocal from social consciousness.

In order to bring an attention to the marginality of “Others”, I choose to experiment with sound in my installation. I have produced three different independent sound narratives that are separate from the video imagery. I present options for my audience to explore non-hierarchal relationship between sound and visual.

When the sound sources were recorded, there was no specifically articulated sound design for the sound recording but arbitrary capturing of sound through built-in microphone in my camera. They were not intended to serve as main narratives in my film when they were recorded but purposely edited to orient my audience to certain times (the past and the present or timelessness) and spaces (the native and the foreign) without synched relationship with the visual. In addition, the independent relationship between audio and video in my work is navigated by my audience’s special attention and awareness on each different sound and video element.

The location sound that Raph Choi, my sound collaborator, and I mixed is designed to conjure a spatial and temporal sense of presence that the audience can experience and interpret about the past event. On the other hand, the vocal and musical sound are intended to evoke a mood of timelessness. (cf. pp. 29-31) Typically the location sound sources have been reassembled as musical elements to lead listeners to different times and spaces. The sound sources vary from the water sounds of my grandmother’s bathing, the cricket noises of my grandmother’s backyard to the sounds of the mortician’s washing ceremony on my grandmother’s body. We also mixed sound materials that were recorded in public places yet in different locations: such as Seoul Metro in Korea and

Vancouver Skytrain in Canada, evoking a sense of travel. It is my intention to metaphorically mimic the shaman's ability and role to evoke 'travel' and to tell the stories about 'the forgotten.'[8] The suggested temporal and spatial mobility through different location sound narrative become a metaphorical device for the shaman's general psychic ability to travel through different spaces and times.

I do not explicitly explain what was the forgotten and abandoned in my grandmother's life story as a shaman. On the other hand, implicitly, I bring my film audience the sense of 'returning of the forgotten' through shedding a light on the noise that has been forgotten in film/television production and spectatorship. Roland Barthes critically reflects on the forgotten qualities and values of sound:

> For the most part, in commercial productions, the sound formula cannot produce an aural fascination. Meant to strengthen the verisimilitude of an anecdote, sound is merely a supplementary support of representation: it must integrate itself docilely with the mimed object; it is in no way detached from that object. And yet, it would take very little to peel this sound strip off: a sound slightly out of synch, or amplified; a voice whose graininess grinds right up against our ear—and once again the visual fascination gets hold of us.

---

[8] There are a number of different ways of understanding shamanism, and what follows is my particular interpretation. Most shamans throughout the world have the ability to channel their clients' different states of mind: consciousness, subconsciouness, and unconsciousness. After their psychic traveling, a shaman recognizes what kind of memory has remained in their clients' minds, where and when the facts of the memory took place, and how these facts in the past still mingle together with a clients' present mindset. This kind of memory travel eventually leads to healing events that are performed through the shaman's storytelling. Healing enables us to return to the stage of balance between chaos and the cosmos. To let this shamanic healing take place, we do need to remember some facts, experiences, or truth that we voluntarily and involuntarily forget for some reason. A shaman' job is to clarify the reasons that let us remember and forget.

(Barthes 2)

Barthes critiques a visually-oriented film apparatus. I too question why and how certain types of media communication patterns become ‘primary,’ ‘general,’ ‘normal,’ ‘acceptable,’ or ‘inevitably dominant’ in film/television production, reproduction, and its spectatorship. Also I wonder how this conventional idea controls and affects the film/television audience’s perceptual and philosophical identification with mainstream media mediation.

Applying these questions to my installation work, I situate two different voice/music sound boxes on the left and right sides of the noise flow box. The way I position the noise flow box in the central position between the left and right commentary music boxes is an attempt to invert the conventional, 5.1 surround sound system in a movie theatre. In the sound design for typical movie theatres, three speakers are positioned in front of the audience seats, and two other speakers are behind. The middle front speaker is exclusively reserved for dialogues or voice-over sound which refers to a higher category, speech or words, in film space. In conventional film production, these kinds of sound sources are meant to be highly informative and purposeful to maximize fidelity of film sound to the cinematographic image. I posit that the subjugation of sound to imagery is increased in conventional customs of the film industry, and that the location of the middle front speaker in 5.1 surround sound is intensifying this subordinated quality of sound.

In such a space, the spectatorship is mostly led to a confrontational experience of high-definition and purposefully visual oriented sound sources. Relatively more independent sound sources of film visual narrative is often not desirable to mainstream film and

television industry so that they becomes peripheral to this traditional theatre space. Therefore, by situating the noise flow in this middle front speaker, I designate the value of marginalized sound sources from low-definition to high-definition, from background to foreground, from the margin to the centre, and from 'secondary' to 'primary'. The peripheral sound is no longer designated for supplementary information to visual but a main sound narrative, replacing dialogue and voice-over sound sources which are usually the focal point in a 5.1 sound system. The content of the noise box and its position in my installation suggests to my audience different ways of thinking and perceiving sound in and through a 'film space.'

In my installation, the two front left and right speakers (i.e., on either side of the middle speaker) are reserved for dubbed voice-over sound sources, which are never located in the stereo channel of a 5.1 sound system. The front left and right speakers in conventional film theatre are reserved not for speech sound but for the emotional interpretation of a narrative in film space. In contrast, I situate the voice-over sound sources decentralized from the location of the middle front speaker to the locations of left and right front speaker. These marginalized speech sound sources are related to language play and translation (cf. pp. 27-28, 30-31), and they are mixed with music instead of purely devoted to the conventional functions such as establishing mood.

The shifted locations of different sound sources that I intend, both with a noise box and two voice/music boxes, are a formal inversion that is not obvious within the gallery space. This inversion alludes to a discourse of language play between Korean and English. The location of sound boxes becomes a symbolic agency that my audience may read my intentions to criticize conventional filmmaking and spectatorship and their

connotation of ‘subversion.’ I seek to make a connection between ‘making political cinema’ and ‘making a cinema politically.’ In this sense, the experimentalism of cinema no longer remains ‘form for form’s sake’ but is connected to theme and its contexts.

In Euro-American avant-garde filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s, there were many kinds of conceptual and formal inversions or experiments. Avant-garde film makers, musicians, and sound theorists have challenged the sensory discrimination between sound and image and defied the privileging of purposeful sound over arbitrary noise or generative sound source in film production. Avant-garde filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard produced films that position “the marginalized sounds” (silence, noise, or nonrepresentational music, etc.) in the centre of their film sound tracks. This avant-garde sound experimentation blends the conventional categories of noise, music, and words and values the highly autonomous status of sound, sound disjunction from imagery, or a preverbal quality of music more than ‘systematically structured and high-representational’ sound tracks of modernist films (Turim 41-43). Maureen Cheryn Turim summarizes the features of the avant-garde sound track:

> Not only does it radically depart from the use of sound to fulfill a narrative progression of images and actions and from the structural uses as reinforcement of thematic developments, but the avant-garde sound track [. . . has] audial characteristics as themselves worthy of attention, as the site of creative activity and expression…the avant-garde sound track defies analysis as an element of signification *within* a system, and forces us to consider the radical plurality of the text. (Turim 35)

These avant-garde experiments are often referred to as subversive gestures, of ‘making

a film politically' rather than 'making a political film.' Godard comments on his new notion of 'political cinema,' and his ideas have been quite influential for experimental filmmakers, especially those who tend to be more focused on critical thinking about the cinema apparatus itself rather than the film content and historical and cultural context.

> These two things (making a political film and making a film politically) are completely different. As Brecht already said, it's not important to know what are the real things but rather how things are real. The relation is in that reality. An image is nothing. It's the relationships between the images that matter. Why are these relationships important? Marxism indicates what is the nature of the relationships between things. They are relations of production. A machine is not or a worker is not important by themselves, what matters is the relationship between the machine and the worker and the relationships between that worker and the other workers who from their own positions have relationships with the machine. (Cha, preface)

I agree with certain ideas of avant-garde filmmakers and their followers' philosophy in 'making films politically.' In particular, I focus on their devaluation of purposeful sound tracks in film/television and the revaluation of sound employing noise and silence as well as voice/music as 'the skeletal apparatus' (Turim 33). These marginalized sound tracks in traditional filmmaking enable both filmmakers and spectators to be aware of the film apparatus and traditional spectatorship. My reading of this as an 'alienation effect,'[9] as describe by Bertolt Brecht, suggests that it may be a potential strategy to resist

[9] Translation of the German *Verfremdungseffekt*. The Marxist poet and theatre practitioner, Bertolt Brecht, coined this literary term to describe the dramatic effect of an

the dominant methods of mediation in mainstream television and film industries.

In this context, my work is addressing the need to make a political cinema that is not separable from 'making cinema politically.' I am referencing critical ideas about cinema and the theories of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Trinh T. Minh-ha. Their work explores experimentalism with cinematic form, cinema author's identity politics as a theme, and spectatorship in various contexts around cinema. The main subject in most of Cha's work is language play among Korean, English, and French. The literal sense of language meets with the 'media language': cinema, ritualistic performance, and writing poetry and theory. The experimental sound work and language play in Cha's work are particularly relevant to my critical ideas and intentions about the acoustic and linguistic qualities of the film sound sources.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, who shares similarities with Cha— in her life experience as well as art practices— wrote in her essay on Cha's multi-linguistic work: "Engaging language as simultaneously seen and heard, her writing plays up the arbitrary relation between the sound of a word, its visual spelling, its multiple referents, and its foreign mate in translation." (Lewallen, 35)

Language, spoken and written, is fundamental to all of Cha's work, and sound was the most distinctive element of Cha's performance (Lewallen 9). Her words, voice, and silence compose evocative poetry which touches all the historical, cultural, and political contexts that are entangled with the diasporic emotional experience. Her sound or

---

audience's detaching and distancing observation or witnessing rather than a submissive identification with "the realistic illusion" in a play or a work of literature.

silence work is filled with the figurative and plural voices of ‘others’ or ‘their otherness’ which had not been heard in singularly centered and determined language structures. The boundaries—between signifier (a form) and signified (a theme), between the personal and the public, and between political and non-political— are interfered with and blurred by Cha’s words, voice, and silence.

> Cha’s academic experiences factored heavily in her work--film theory, semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism and literature all make appearances. Though Cha took an intellectual approach to art making, theory was not an end in itself. Instead, she used theoretical discourse to circle in and out of a set of interrelated ideas, always finding at the center something personal and specific to tell. Her experiences as an immigrant, of learning to communicate in a foreign tongue and of living between two cultures, were some of her most pervasive meditations. (Garcia)

As Erin Garcia summarized Cha’s investigations above, Cha’s evocative and conjuring diasporic voice echoes for me the experience of shamanic voices. Many shamans use chanting, songs, or eccentric sound performance to conjure the death or special spirits with whom clients wish to connect. For my own sound work, Cha’s poetic voices were a shamanic call. One of the most well-known of her books, Dictee, invited alien and at the same time familiar emotions and inspiration to me, and, when I read the book, I experienced something like a trance state of mind. It is right after this experience, I wrote down my poems in English, then in Korean. (cf. Appendix II, pp. 54-56) My sound collaborator and I have recorded and mixed the poems, and I named the sound track ‘my personal voice’ and placed it in one of the voice/music sound boxes.

This personal voiced sound box is situated on the left side of the noise box. When

my audience approaches this box, they hear a singular voice, my voice, reciting and singing my own poems as well as the ancient Korean poem, *Kong mudoha ka*, 'Song of the Konghu Zither.'[10] All of the poems express my longing and grieving for my grandmother whom I deeply loved, lost, and now miss to the core of my being. However, these emotions are a collective experience of human beings, and my intention is that the visceral nature of this music will trigger a collectivity beyond the historical and cultural differences among the audience.

On the other hand, the 'public voices' on the right side of the noise box begin with collective, communal sounds. At my grandmother's funeral in December 2005 in Korea, I recorded a Roman Catholic mass song and prayer which have very little to do with my grandmother's original identity as a Korean shaman, but with her decision (a 'forced' choice) to be baptized as a Roman Catholic in her later life. To create cultural juxtapositions, Raphael Choi and I recorded a Roman Catholic mass in Vancouver. This Roman Catholic sound track has been produced to construct the same content yet two different contexts of Christianity. This public voiced sound box is a counterpart to Personal Voice/Music box. The Korean and Vancouver Catholics sang and prayed the same Catholic song or prayer following the same order of the Catholic mass, and the

---

[10] *Kong mudoha ka* is an oral story, preserved in Chinese written records, in which a wife loses her husband to madness and witnesses his drowning while he attempts to cross a river (cf. Appendix III with translations, pp. 57-59). The woman could not stop her husband's attempt to cross and sings to grieve her loss and express her love. A Chinese sailor passing by hears this woman's song and is profoundly moved. Upon returning home to his wife, the sailor relates these events. His wife, in turn, plays a zither and thus begins the 'Song of the Konghu Zither.' This historical poem is rich in its potential reading and insight into Muism, song and literature in the ancient era: "The hero of *Kong mudoha ka* is thought to have been a shaman who drowned himself while in a trance. Perhaps the poem indicates the loss of the shaman's efficacy and authority when ancient Korea was transformed into a structured state." ("Korean literature." Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

solemn mood of the music is delivered by the associations of a similar Christian ritual. However, this kind of 'collective voice/music sound' and its effects are dependent on and differentiated by the variations of the two diverse congregations' own pace, melodies, and pauses, which are based on each group's cultural context. Some melodies and tempos of Korean Roman Catholic prayers sound more similar to Korean traditional ritual music – which has many connections to Muism (Korean shamanism) – or to Buddhist chanting, rather than to Roman Catholic prayer in Vancouver. If a non-Korean speaker listens to this Roman Catholic prayer they cannot hear the literal meaning of the prayer but only the non-verbal, sound characteristics, which evoke a different cultural or religious association to Western listeners. Like Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's work, the play between languages and their acoustic quality yields variations within the soundtrack, Collective Voices. The meanings of languages (the signified) are determined by the various physical qualities of sound (the signifiers), and the relationship between signified and signifiers is not consistent or lineal, but undetermined and non-lineal. Furthermore, the direction of the variation flows from the collective to the individual giving unique acoustic characteristics to the personal voices among the group.

With the noise box in the middle, these two personal and public voice/music sound boxes are matched through interactive 'language controllers.' Unlike the centre noise box, the two boxes on the sides have two sound mixing faders paired together and attached to each of them. When my audience approaches these boxes, the pair of faders is in the default position in the middle range, and the audience can simultaneously listen to two different language plays of sound tracks: Korean from the left channel or an English translation from the right channel. From here if the audience desires to move the fader towards the left end, they can hear that the volume of the English is gradually

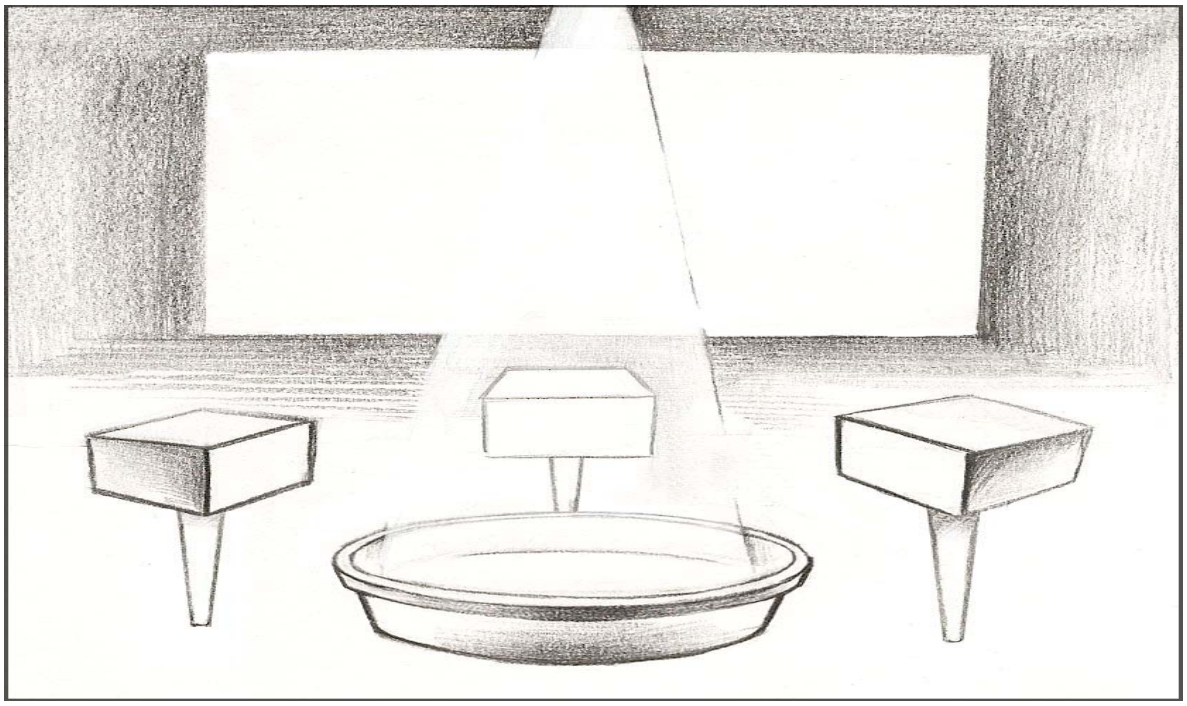
reduced while that of the Korean is increased. At the extreme left, there is only Korean, and the audience only hears the single language channel. The polarity of the sliders is the range that my audience can explore and negotiate between languages in my two voice/music sound boxes. In this context, the sound interaction becomes not only functional—to offer non-Korean speakers a translation—but also political—to negotiate two different language attributes and values: Korean, the foreign language and English, the local yet also the global language.

Additionally, this negotiated interaction is derived from my questions about power relations between author and audience in cinema and is answered by a *mu-dang*'s role as a medium. Having discussed the theatre space of cinema and the conventional spectatorship in chapter 2, section I, I turn to contemplate the matter of translation. When one translates from one language to another, one can suddenly realize how inadequate the signifiers are to match to the signified and how uncertain their relationship can be. The translator needs to make sense of the historically and culturally differentiated qualities and values in two different languages. Differences need to be negotiated to be integrated. Then another question follows: who determines the negotiation. As a film author, I felt a strong desire to maintain the decision making, particularly since this project is based on a subjective narrative. This impulsive desire sometimes disturbed me with suspicion and doubt about 'non-Korean audience in North America.' There was a difficulty that I, a filmmaker, could not trust the audience's open reading/reception of my work —'open' does not necessarily mean a genuine and substantive reception, and can potentially mean an ethnocentric reading in the wrong context, and result in an adamant refusal of 'other' perspectives.

Nevertheless, this tension from the dichotomy between film author and audience has been resolved through the *mu-dang*'s wisdom. When a *mu-dang* performs in a public ritual, she is in control of the ritual and the channeling to others' psyches yet she remains herself a medium rather than a manipulator or a creator. Generally speaking, this neutral and negotiating position of the shaman is considered to be a virtuous quality that a m*u-dang* can aspire to in Muism. Similarly, I let go of the decision-making regarding translation. The meaning of sounds and the connection between the signifier and the signified are determined by my audience. Although I prepare all the primary sound materials and technical options for their choice, the audience performs a signifying translation in the language play under their own control, and the ritualistic meaning in my sound installation is available not by the text itself, or by my intention, but by the audience's interactivity.

III. Videos:

Visual numinosum[11] and liminality beyond binary visions



There are two video projections on either side of three sound boxes. One is projected over the surface of an opaque liquid in a rubber tub, and the other is shown on the gallery wall. They differ in shape and scale: a small circle of one metre diameter and a large rectangle measuring approximately two by three metres. However, the video vignettes of life, death, traveling, and rituals connect both projections and establish a thematic, if ambiguous, relationship.

[11] For my purposes, I define 'numinosum' to be a 'mysterious, mystical experience of archetypal Otherness that results from ritualistic or religious practice.' Rudolf Otto coined the term 'the numinous' in *Das Heilige* (1917) and his investigation of the concept stimulated the thinking of many others, including Carl Jung. I believe numinosum can be found through many, if not most, traditions of religion or spiritual practice. Cf. "There is no religion in which it does not live as the real innermost core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the name." (Otto 6) Discussing Otto and Jung, Berman notes: "Those who listen to storytellers and those who undergo shamanic journeys can both be said to experience the effect of the numinosum, and Jung clearly regards the experience of this as being fundamental to our survival..." (Berman 142).

It is joy to be hidden, but disaster not to be found.
—D. W. Winnicott, quoted in Epstein's Open to Desire

In one of my video projections, the audience sees that a younger Asian woman washes an older Asian woman, who is sitting inside a bathtub that looks identical to the physically present tub, into which the video sequence is projected. The sense of care-giving suddenly changes into an antiseptic, clinical scene and, in front of a morgue's freezer, two Asian male morticians wash the elder woman's body that was once alive and washed by her grand daughter. Here the audience sees the full array of life and death introduced as a dramatic juxtaposition of ritualistic bathing scenes around the woman's body. The paralleled life and death images are separated and paced by the images of an elder person's wrinkled hands that are my grandmother's furrowed hands. As a shaman invokes spirits or ghosts, I conjure the full circle of life, death, and the lingering moments in between, through this video sequence.

In contrast, in modern society, the materiality of one's own body and its death are institutionally medicalized and effectively censored in media mediation. The daily life of elders is rarely presented in mainstream media, and this omission makes their lives seem trivial and ignores their deep wisdom that is beneath the surface. Magical shamanism is embodied not through an exotic portrait of shamans, but through the enchantment of the elder woman's daily living. In addition, the death of elders is equally undervalued and underrepresented in main stream media. Mainstream visual representations typically employ a sense of immortality and dispose of unsightly scenes of life and death even though they are essential parts of all human beings' common experience and existential conditions.

The underrepresented, invisible, or devalued imagery of elders and their death critically and intentionally disrupts a universal reading of my visual documents. The video footage of my grandmother is documented as a private home movie, but it generates an emotional impact for viewers who often cannot see such truthful moments in mainstream film and television. The milk-like screen in the tub blurs the imagery and softens the edges of the images, not only desensitizing the traumatic scene around my grandmother's dead body but also inviting the viewers to explore beyond the façade of the sensationalized realistic representation of her death. Through the silent video vignette, I lure my audience to engage with the precarious side of life and death as a shaman does through her ritual performance.

Furthermore, I examine the position of a filmmaker (myself) and viewers in this particular video projection. More likely, viewers of this video projection will literally 'look down' at the tub screen on the ground. The physical location of the tub forms a hierarchical view point. If my audience is aware of the connotation of their position, they can compose questions around it. In a conventional screening space, viewing an object is not an individual, private act but a public reading that generates the power of giving meaning. Due to the conventions of seating in a movie theatre, we are not accustomed to question the position of our spectatorship. The lowered position of the tub shifts the traditional relationship between viewer and screen, and this shift is linked to the introspection of my camera position, as well.

The video camera also looks down at its object, my grandmother's body. Some of the footage is taken by Young-Hyeon Cho, my cousin, and this video footage was taken randomly rather than purposefully. In this sense, it is not my point of view, technically.

On the contrary, the high angle position of the video camera seems to imply a difference in status between my grandmother and me. When I edit this home movie footage, I see that my position is separated from hers. I want to recognize that my grandmother and I are Asian women in the same family, but 'I' am a young, 'educated' female filmmaker who possesses the technology to record and edit video material and construct a narrative, while 'she' is an elderly woman interviewee who is nearly illiterate and whose body is naked and becomes an object in front of my camera. Here the difference between my grandmother's and my positions is related to the historical tensions in cinema between an interviewer and an interviewee or between the anthropologist and the 'primitive,' native informant.

In her book, Woman, Native, Other, Trinh T. Min-ha introspectively acknowledges the tensions derived from the differences among women, genders of filmmakers, ways of knowing, researchers' positions and views. In this context, Min-ha's own introspection and investigation in documentary-making encourages my critical thinking about the positions of viewing. Min-ha articulates the differences between anthropology and ethnography as well as between writing and oral traditions. She argues that anthropology has adopted historical valuations regarding these differences. 'The Western white male anthropologist's missionary view point' about 'the African primitive native woman' is not only criticized by Minh-ha but also linked to her own introspection about her own related positions. She is an insider as a coloured woman and differentiated from dominant outsider-researchers, but, at the same time, she acknowledges that she also possesses her own privileged positions and values over many other women. She is a researcher (observer not the object), a writer and, with her camera, a recorder. Her way of interpreting, recording, and writing is necessarily different from the Senegalese women's way of knowing and living, and Minh-ha's position is prestigeous in hieatical view of history. My position as documentarian of my grandmother's life story is, I believe, parallel to Minh-ha's position.

Minh-ha disapproves of philanthropic approaches and languages regarding 'the native' that objectify the otherness of the native and obscure their dominant naming agency. I am also conscious about my approaches to my grandmother's images, identities, and life stories. When I started to edit the video footage of my grandmother, I was highly conscious of guarding this narrative from readings that sentimentalized or fetishized a tragic life story of a Third World woman. As Minh-ha seeks to negotiate between her privileged positions as a writer and a documentarian – and her othered positions as a woman of colour from the Third world, I must negotiate mine.

As a documentarian, I was usually involved in propagandistic documentary journalism that was often constructed around the power of visual narratives. A highly informative narrative conveys literal and pre-determined logics of meaning. This factual representation and narration is primarily governed by imagery, and these kinds of images are inadequate to highlight the numinous or liminal readings of Otherness. I engage with Otherness, as I embrace my grandmother's inherited shamanhood. This new role leads me to take on the complex façade of shaman's performance. In the Korean shamanic ritual, *Kut*, a shaman seems to reveal the hidden abyss and suddenly conceals it again, and she performs many different roles of spirits to initially evoke and entertain ghosts and spirits, only to coldly chase them off at the end of ritual. These contradictory behaviours and tones are considered to be necessary to flourish and guard our well-being in the vicissitudes of life and death.

> *Kut*, itself is a drama, which is structured on the basic principles of 1) inviting, 2) entertaining, and supplicating, and 3) sending off, the spirits… The shamans' voices and miens change to conform with the various possessing spirits. The sponsors appeal to, plead with, coax, bribe, reason and argue with, and sometimes

> even chide, the spirits. A direct exchange takes place there and then. The spirits get 'entertained' with food and drink, and very often given money for 'fares,' and in return give the sponsors a blessing, a promise of future help and solutions to their problems (Kim, H. Korean, 165)

Therefore, in order to accommodate a *mu-dang*'s various roles in *kut*, in my installation, I needed to change the way I produced my work, in order to invoke the sense of numinosum and liminality. Lessening the dominance of visual information was the key for me to unfold these values.

The magic is not from an invention but from an awareness about habitual or mundane ways of thinking and feeling. The questions about my authorship and my audience's reception contribute to this awareness and that is the magic and power of cinema. For this reason, Victor Turner discusses the structural affinities of different studies and practices that utilize liminality: "Liminality, marginality and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art." (Turner 128-9)

The aesthetics of home movies exemplify the marginality and structural inferiority that Turner identifies. There are consensual distinctions between structured video art and unstructured home movies. Home movies imply 'unprofessional', 'arbitrary', 'unorganized', and 'unqualified' values and aesthetics while video art is considered 'qualified' and the 'structured.' These two distinct terrains have different representational patterns and semiotics as well as their own values. My intention to use a home movie record of my grandmother to construct certain visual narratives is an attempt to explore the differences between high and low art practices and between 'qualified' and 'unqualified' visual language.

I have edited these fragmented shots of daily routine out of unstructured family video footage that refers to home movie imagery. Through my intentional editing, I attempt to name and visualize a language of Otherness which helps me to enunciate my grandmother's closeted shamanhood.

The other video projection exhibits a sense of travel and ritual; and runs parallel to the first video projection. The collage of video images in this second projection assembles sequences of travel and ritual. It demonstrates various randomly shot scenes: the subway scenery in Seoul Metro, my own ritual for my grandmother in Vancouver, the Roman Catholic funeral of my grandmother, the playful image in my grandmother's pepper field, and my grandmother's ashes from her cremation. The segmented images of different time, space, and ritual actions fashion the suggestion of fluidity, and it is similar to what shamans do with their storytelling. The different events, characters, and surroundings in several *mises en scene* intertwine to create a meditative flow and to illuminate the space for the enchanted numinosum and transformative liminality.

Harvesting peppers, sharing light laughter and ease with loved ones, or reflecting on moments in nature: there is an imagistic narrative in the second video projection that I name as a melancholic celebration of life, death, and their transitions. The personal nostalgic memory of my grandmother mingles around her ashen body and her absent spaces. The two different kinds of religious rituals—*Jesa*, Korean traditional ancestral worship and the Roman Catholic funeral—are symbolized as incantations for my grandmother's presence and absence. In brief, the second video projection communicates a celebratory eloquence juxtaposed to images of life, death, and its intervals. Although the first and second video projections are physically separated and screened on differently shaped screens and viewed at different

angles, there is a subtle thematic relationship between them, which exists as an option for the audience to explore.

My video collage is inspired by Trinh T. Minh-ha's first film, Reassemblage (1982). This ethnographic film documents the daily life of Senegalese women, while her subsequent book Woman, Native, and Other (1989) provides a theoretical grounding for the film. In both her film and book, she critiques the traditional ethnographic documentary-making of ethnocentric and andro-centric anthropology. However, Minh-ha is careful not to make sweeping and simplistic political accusations. Instead she takes poetic visual lanuage as her political strategy. Her spectators do not see any exotic scenes or views of 'primitive, African woman,' but a full assortment of women's life in Senegal. The everyday life, daily labour, nurturing of children, decay, and death are equally depicted imagery, and they become an enthralling and multi-faceted flow – women's life in a small, West African village. Further, Minh-ha did not add her own interpretation of these lives, but rather, her poetic voice-over questioned her role as a filmmaker, and most of the sound in her film is independently separated from the visuals. This disjunctive relationship between the sound and the visual gives more conceptual and perceptual space for the viewer to see, think, and feel in different ways than could be done through conventional ethnographic documentaries.

Her experimental language in Reassemblage poetically dissolves the binary divisions of self and other, filmmaker and subject, First and Third World, and her political agenda yields plural and fluid relationships and dialogue. I call her filmic tactic 'magical realism of Others', the resurrection of the minority groups' own rhetoric. This kind of visual language is linked to the shamanic performance through my two channel video

installation.

To sum up my video work, the magical values of visual storytelling come to life through the recognition of the forgotten relationship between young and old, between life (presence) and death (absence), between dominant and subordinated, and between mundane and the fantastic. These binary yet dialogic relationships exist everywhere through many different forms in our daily lives, in special life experiences, or sought through the cinematic apparatus. The ubiquitous shamanic force blurs the sharpened edges of 'I' and 'You' and shows us the way to the numinosum.

> When our daily lives become mechanical and we find ourselves taking what we have been blessed with for granted, what we need is the kind of experience that will renew our enthusiasm for living again. This is what the ritual offered on neo-shamanic workshops can provide and what people, judging by its popularity, hunger for. (Berman 142)

CONCLUSION

Lessons of Cinema Experiments, Shamanism, and 'Others'

My research led me to different ways of opening several kinds of dialogues, not only through actual language, but also by opening up the languages of different media in cinema—sculpture, sound, and video, and the languages of different contexts (Korea and Canada). Cinema remains, for me, a magical language, like a shaman's incantation. As there are different realms or times that a *mu-dang* can travel through, there are different elements synthesized in the cinematic apparatus: sound, image, light and motion. Like a *mu-dang* conjuring and playing with the numerous spirits and ghosts in her performance, I experimented with cinematic elements. Through the sculptural elements in my installation, I have examined how the interactivity of spectatorship can be enhanced through shifting the architectural aspects of a typical movie theatre. I gained knowledge of how the audio can be autonomous to the visual, and how acoustic values of language can play with the semantic relationship between signifier and signified. In this way, I also became aware of the cultural contexts and negotiations through language play, and I invite my audience to this awareness through an interactive sound control. In addition, I shed light on the underrepresented images of aging and death in mainstream media and draw more attention to the full array of life, death, and our ritualistic agencies in-between them. I seek to name the different values and qualities of Otherness through editing visual narratives out of marginalized home movie footage.

My experimental attempts at a new form of cinema disrupt the conventional ritual aspects of film production and the spectatorship in which that encounter takes place. The

rituality of my multi-media installation occurs through different types of engagements between gallery space and art viewer, between cinema and film spectator, between music and listeners, and between multi-media performance and audience. All the engagements in my work are intended to connect the viewer to a new awareness and experience of culture, history, and language, symbolizing shamanhood and Otherness.

When I started to open up my grandmother's story as a shaman, it was only about her, and I felt separated from her life story – as an observer, as a researcher, and as a filmmaker. Eventually, the research and filmmaking turned back to where I am, who I am, and what I can do with my filmmaking. The negotiation among different cultures, languages, media and receptions of cinema that I learned through my multimedia installation are lessons gifted from my grandmother's closeted shaman identity. A skilled and virtuous shaman controls not her clients' minds, but rather employs her psychic powers and media to communicate the untold stories and issues of people and of the world. The heritage from my grandmother's shamanhood and her Otherness vis-à-vis mainstream cultures guided me in the process of developing skillsets and perspectives as a filmmaker who will willingly seek out the languages of Otherness.

WORKS CITED

Barthes, Roland. "Upon Leaving the Movie Theater." Apparatus—Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings. Ed. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. New York: Tanam Press, 1980. 1-4.

Berman, Michael. The Nature of Shamanism and the Shamanic Story. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung. DICTEE. Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1995.

---. Ed. Apparatus—Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings. New York: Tanam Press, 1980.

Epstein, Mark. Open to Desire—Embracing a Lust for Life: Insights from Buddhism and Psychotherapy. New York: Gotham Books, 2005.

Garcia, Erin. "Awakenings." Afterimage 29.4 (2002): 13. 17 March 2009 <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.eciad.ca:2048/hww/results/getResults.jhtml?_DARGS=/hww/results/results_common.jhtml.21>

Kim, Hyun-key Hogarth. Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism. Seoul: Jimoondang International Publishing Company, 1999.

Kim, Tae-kon. Korean Shamanism—Muism. Trans. Ed. Chang Soo-kyung. Seoul: Jimoondang International Publishing Company, 1998.

Kendall, Laurel. Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits—Women in Korean Ritual Life. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.

---. Ed. The Life and Hard Times of a Korean Shaman. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988.

"Korean literature." Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2009. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. 18 Mar. 2009 <http://search.eb.con/eb/article-61967>.

Lewallen, Constance M., ed. The Dream of the Audience—Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982), Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2001.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. “White Spring.” The Dream of the Audience—Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982). Ed. Constance M. Lewallen. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2001. 33-50.

---. Woman, Native, Other—Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.

---. Dir. Reassemblage. VHS. Women Make Movies, 1982.

Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. 1923. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Turim, Maureen Cheryn. Abstraction in Avant-Garde Films. 1978. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985.

Turner, Victor W. The Ritual Process—Structure and Anti-Structure. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969.

WORKS CONSULTED

Altman, Rick, ed. Sound Theory Sound Practice. New York, London: Routledge, 1992.

Burke, John Gordon, ed. Print, Image, and Sound. Chicago: American Library Association, 1972.

Choi, Won-Oh. An Illustrated Guide to Korean Mythology. 2004/2005. Kent: Global Oriental, 2008.

Jung, Carl. G., The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious. 1959. New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1969.

Kim, Hyun-key Hogarth. Syncretism of Buddhism and Shamanism in Korea. Edison, Seoul: Jimoondang International Publishing Company, 2002.

Lee, Yong-Shik, Shaman Ritual Music in Korea. Edison, Seoul: Jimoondang International Publishing Company, 2004.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. Framer Framed. New York, London: Routledge, 1992.

---. Dir. Surname Viet Given Name Nam. DVD. Women Make Movies, 1989.

---. Ed. When The Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics. New York: Routledge, 1991.

---. Ed. Cinema Interval. New York, London: Routledge, 1999.

---. Ed. The Digital Film Event. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Philipson, Morris. Outline of a Jungian Aesthetics. 1963. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1991.

Pinchbeck, Daniel. Breaking Open The Head—A Psychedelic Journey into the Heart of Contemporary Shamanism. New York: Broadway Books, 2003.

Ripinsky-Naxon, Michael. The Nature of Shamanism. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Seo, Dae-seok, Myths of Korea. Seoul, Somerset: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 2000

Sider, Larry, Diane Freeman and Jerry Sider, eds. Soundscape—The School of Sound Lectures 1998-2001. London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003.

Turner, Victor, ed. Celebration—Studies in Festivity and Ritual. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982.

Weis, Elisabeth and John Belton, eds. Film Sound—Theory and Practice. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Zettl, Herbert. Sight, Sound, Motion—Applied Media Aesthetics. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973.

김열규 외, 한국의 무속문화, 박이정출판사, 1998

김영일, 한국무속과 신화의 연구, 부산: 세종출판사, 2005

최용수, 아시아의 무속과 춤 연구, 서울: 민속원, 2005

FILMOGRAPHY

How to Draw Happiness
– A biographical documentary on Korean Canadian Visual Artist, David Khang
(DV, 24min, colour, 2008)

nationally broadcasted in South Korea
won second award in Seoul Prize of Korean Broadcast System

***Mu-dang*'s Shrine**
–One of the *Sindang* series (Muti-media installation, 2008)

Exhibited in *Mediafesto,* Emily Carr University, Vancouver, Canada

***Salpuri* Dance —Korean Traditional Shamanic Dance**
— A puppetry and stop motion animation (DV, 8min, colour, 2007)

Web-broadcasted by the Digital Diversity Competition of Radio Canada International

Quick Market on the Run
—A news documentary (DV, 5min, colour, 2004)

internationally distributed by Video-Out, Vancouver, Canada
broadcasted in In-cheon through i-TV, South Korea

Defamation of Character; The 'Hidden Card' for Perpetrators of Sexual Violence
—A news documentary (DV, 9min, colour, 2004)

internationally distributed by Video-Out, Vancouver, Canada
broadcasted in In-cheon through i-TV, South Korea

Threat of Murder
—A news documentary (DV, 6min, colour, 2004)

internationally distributed by Video-Out, Vancouver, Canada

Sure, I'm Fine!
– A Short Film (DV, 16min, colour,2004)

internationally distributed by Video-Out
exhibiting on Korean Queer web site, HAPPYEBAN and HAPPY2VAN
screened at 2nd Pusan Lesbian & Gay Film Festival
Pusan, South Korea
screened at 6th Korean Queer Culture Festival, Seoul, Korea
screened at Feminist workshop by Taegu Solidarity for women's Emancipation of Korea,
Taegu, South Korea
screened at 9th Chonju Human Rights Film Festival, Chonju, South Korea
screened at Feminist camp by Solidarity for women's Emancipation of Korea
Daejeon, South Korea
screened at Benefit by Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea,
Seoul, South Korea
screened at 4th Rainbow-fish Queer Film Festival' of Chung-Ang University
Seoul and An-sung campus of Chung-ang University, South Korea

Klein's bottle (First edition) and **Draw a line** (Second edition)
– Short films (16mm, 10min and 4min, colour,2000)

Screened at An-sung campus of Chung-ang University, South Korea

APPENDIX I

Once Upon A Time…

— The story of my grandmother, Sam-sik Kim

In a dreamlike scene, I am seeing a five year-old girl secretly watching her grandmother's early morning prayer. Before the sun rises, hal-mae ('grandmother') lights the candles in the shrine in her closet. I hear her voice chanting and the soft, low, and warm sighs in intervals. The mysterious rituals, in front of her closet shrine, tugged on my curiosity and walked with me into the unknown. When I enjoy the dream world, the joy and pleasure of enchantment from her ambiguous shrine lullabies me at dawn in the rural neighbourhood of my childhood days with my grandmother.

In the summer of 2008, I made a request to my friend's mother, Ok-sung Choi, who is an openly practicing *mu-dang*, to conduct a small shamanistic ritual calling my grandmother, Sam-sik Kim. At that point, I was in great suffering caused by the active stage of my chronic illness, and Jee-ho Lim and Ok-sung Choi suggested to me that I might get some answers and guidance from my grandmother. So I asked them to mediate a small ritual to conjure my grandmother's voice. Ok-sung Choi channeled my grandmother, a senior *mu-dang* and spoke my grandmother's voice, the voice of a closeted *mu-dang* from the 'world of the dead.'

During the ritual, they channeled my grandmother's voice and it was extremely angry and resentful. The voice pointed to my poor health as a message to the entire family. She spoke of so many abandoned, hungry ghosts in my patrilineal blood line that I

realized she and my family have gone through many sufferings and traumas.

My grandmother's voice told Ok-sung Choi that she did not want to convert from Muism to Roman Catholicism as much as she did not want to choose her initiations as a *mu-dang* at a young age. However, there was a tacit and forceful consensus in my patrilineal lineage, and she could not help choosing her religious practices as well as her life choices and had to follow other family members' will and wishes. She was mourning that all of her sacrifices were forgotten. My family has been remembering memorials for her yet it was not in a way that she wished and wanted to be respected. My grandmother was chosen and forced to be a *mu-dang*, and she practiced Muism for over thirty years. During three decades and more, her life had been associated with a family secret, shame, and trauma. In the final stage of her life when most of my family changed their religion to a more acceptable and desirable one for contemporary life in Korea, she was made to convert to Roman Catholicism . She was a person who was constantly expected to sacrifice, and her sacrifice was taken for granted as her own choice and will.

My grandmother was a *mu-dang* whose body-governed spirit was patrilineal –from her husband's side (my grandfather's side) of the family. The spirit is named *Chosang Shin*, an ancestral god that is passed on patrilineally, although manifested and embodied only in women (Hyun-key Kim, Korean, 116, 144). In other words, the daughters (like myself), who were born to the paternal lineage, or more likely wives (like my mother and grandmother), who married sons in this lineage, can be chosen as a vehicle or a medium, a *mu-dang* for the patrilineal ancestral worship and celebration. Through fragmented conversations, where I discovered this family secret, I realized that my grandmother was

initiated as a *mu-dang* when she was in her early thirties. She and other relatives told me that she did not want to be a *mu-dang*. However, when she lost her last son in an accident when he was 4 year old, a dramatic loss of family property followed. She heard the spiteful ancestral voice saying that the catastrophes were warnings and future misfortunes would arise if she did not choose to be initiated as a *mu-dang*. This shamanic call was a forceful trauma, not only for my grandmother, but also for my mother, for me, and the rest of our family. We, the descendents of this *mu-dang* lineage – potential *mu-dang*s of the future– can be forced and chosen like my grandmother was, and be told by patriarchal leaders of our communities to sacrifice our freedoms and lifestyles in order to become a spiritual medium.

I often ask the question: "If there was no stigma associated with being a *mu-dang* in Korean culture, would my family appreciate and respect my grandmother's shaman identity just as we honoured her Roman Catholic name and identity as Theresa Kim?" Obviously this question is an attempt to make sense of her closeted shamanhood, and it is connected to the historical and cultural context of Muism.

Muism is most often confused with Japanese, Chinese, Siberian shamanisms or shamanistic practices. Certainly, there are similar and shared traits among these many shamanisms, as these nations and ethnic groups above have exchanged and intermingled with each other's historical and cultural origins and variations. Geographically and historically, Korea is connected to these influences, and Muism is no exception; however, it has quite different features from other shamanisms in Asia especially when it comes into its gender identity context.

Siberian shamanism is predominantly performed by male shamans, while Korean shamans are mostly female. Muism is considered and has survived as a women's domain in the patriarchal system and history of Korea. Therefore, it is reasonable and necessary to investigate Muism in the context of women's minority identity, the otherness or other minority groups' identities which are often invisible or underrepresented.

For my grandmother's story, it is necessary to see it interconnected with her doubled Otherness as a shaman as well as a woman. In addition, when I open up this 'personal Otherness' to a North American public in which Muism has little or no references and knowledge, my grandmother's otherness is complicated by one more layer of otherness – her Asianness. Therefore my thesis project stems from her personal story, which is invariably associated with Otherness and a minority group's identity.

It is my hope that these marginalized or 'othered' identities have been well-presented and practiced with my full respect and attention, as well as that of my audience. And I choose to believe that my audience's open mind will contribute to honouring and celebrating 'Others' through this multi-media ritual performance.

APPENDIX II

Listen to the present day

— The story of myself

It starts from a personal attempt to recognize what has been buried— my grandmother's identity as a shaman and her stigmatized life story. This personal attempt is intertwined with my new identity as a Korean diaspora artist in North America. My sense of self and citizenship has been accepted not in the mainstream in North America but as "a special norm" in the specialized cultural ghetto seen as Chinese or Japanese culture. In my own cultural experience, many Korean immigrants and international students around Vancouver are abandoned and ignored in many ways under the larger nationalities: Chinese or Japanese which have often been appeared as "Asian Imperialism" in East North Asian history. That is why, when I met Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's reading for the first time, I finally felt that I have an access to the language that speaks about "myself." Truly, in the moments of access, I felt "channeled" in certain mental states to shine through the invisible ghost identity of myself. Her poetic voice healed the heavy feelings and emotions that I carried deep inside much more than any other sociopolitical terms in academic texts. It was a call for me to re-originate myself from the sense of disorientation to the sense of connection, and, since I heard Cha's voice, I often use her empowered language to articulate and voice my missing identities and cultural contexts: the personal and at the same time relational notions of "self" and "nation."

However, I had to be concerned with or to be conscious about my emphasis on my

nationality as a Korean. In certain contexts, it could sound too nationalistic to be exclusive to non-Korean people. Also there are many Korean people who I do not identify myself with such as homophobes, sexists, racists, extreme patriots, or red-complex neo-liberalist hyper-capitalists in South Korea. Holding my nationality seems like grabbing a double edged sword with bare hands. I need the sword to guard myself yet the sword can get another hurt. One point I found myself very split and agonized with my political agendas without knowing how I could make my language not defensive but resourceful in order to open up the multi-faceted life experience and culture in the new land of North America.

The key to get out of the split world inside myself and to heal myself was to go deeply back to the origins that my political agendas were derived from. I had to ask myself the reasons why I have been so voluntarily obsessed with the political enlightenment and revolutionary changes in societies, cultures, and language system. No one asked or forced me to tangle up to those heavy political boundaries yet I could not just let them go away from my life. In my own contemplations, I found that it started from my personal experience to be an outsider from many different kinds of mainstream frames. It threaded from my childhood when I observed that my grandmother was a very popular person in her village and helped the villagers yet, at the same time she had always been in trouble with all sorts of dirty things: stigmas, shames, condemnations, abuse, and violence. My family went through the turmoil and the trauma of “being different”, and the way we managed this ugly heavy reality was by ignoring the way she lived as much as we could. As a child, I did not understand what was really happening at that moment and why things happen that way, but I knew and felt what it feels like to be excluded, ignored, alienated, and bullied yet not to have language or means to speak out. The social

attentions, empathy, and support, which I, my grandmother, or my family really needed in my childhood are the real reasons to speak about others who may experience or have experienced the same thing in their own private lives.

In this context, my idea and motivation to seek the affinity between an artist and a shaman operates. In my own interpretation of the world, there are many blocked social communications, ignorant systematic conformities, and violent realities in many different social structures and history, and they are born from, practiced, and reinforced by each human being's personal and impersonal apathy or indifference. In addition these apathies in "sick modern civilizations" gracefully justify its madness through their use of logic and media. In my personal philosophy, the structured logic and media in our civilizations come down into the history and conform "the mainstream language." This type of language programs most "civilized human beings." The aggressive mainstream language system certainly lacks and limits the human beings' innate abilities to make harmony between nature and culture or to transcend all kinds of linguistic systems in the mainstream. When an art becomes a means of awakening and a healing method or methodology from this kind of systematically manmade madness, that is the spot that I want to posit my role as an artist and aim for through my art practice. In my analogy, it is metaphorically paralleled with a shaman's task to do healing performance and storytelling to help her clients' devastating life crisis and disorders in their mind and body. And, interestingly enough, an artist and a shaman share one more similar thing in their own language. They speak through what has been forgotten or concealed in one's own mind or societies yet they use different language than conventional one. In fact, most often, their language has appeared twisted, alienating, or peculiar, yet it shines through and heals through "the truth": we are given this body and mind—the internal and external worlds— to live a certain limited time, we share together many different kinds of

activities and meanings of our lives, and we need to learn how the harmonic co-existence of every different part of existence can be done under the umbrella of compassion and wisdom.

However, on the surface the connection between an artist and a shaman can be superficially interpreted to have exotic and psychedelic artifacts in what is seen as an eccentric practice. In that point, observing the way of my grandmother's living taught me through her presence and absence that the extraordinary transformation is in the everyday and the ordinary.

As I described in my written thesis, the magic takes place and is embodied within the small things that we take for granted and are forgetfully buried deep in our internal world. The desire to seek exotic objects or fantastic external conditions needs to meet with the internal inquiry of how we perceive, conceptualize, and evaluate all sorts of events and relationships happening in this world. Also this inquiry should not be a mere intellectual inquisition but an empathetic journey to bridge the connections between private and public, between body and mind, and between cognitive and emotional spheres in one's own consciousness.

When I was videographing my grandmother, she knew that not much time was left in her life, and a few weeks of "special attentions" to her is all she could appreciate after seventy years of long hardship and silence. Yet she chose to be at her place in a rural area in Korea rather than in a hospital in a metropolitan city, to sustain the ordinary life she was used to living. She was making her physical functions relying on Morphine that her doctor prescribed, and her swollen and drugged body was heavy to carry around yet

she got up at dawn as she did for her whole life and constantly insisted that she needed to do daily labour as regularly as she did before she was diagnosed as a terminal cancer patient. She prayed for her loved ones in early morning and late night, she made meals for her granddaughters, and she went to the pepper field with her villagers during the day time even though she could not take a shower by herself when the painkiller was too low to make her body function. To me, these kinds of activities seem very trivial compared to the death and bodily sufferings that she faced. My cousin and I tried to persuade her that she should drop those trivial activities and treat her last precious moments in a special way. However, for my grandmother, life and death are not separated at all so that none of them needs to be typically specialized in such a way. She likened life and death to the air or weather that we always have yet forget. She knew that there was no need to make a big deal of the existential events of all beings but there was a special need to be aware of the undifferentiated meanings and values of those taken-for-granted things in our lives. Her frugal and humble attitudes and great faith and devotion to simply being in this world and connected to other people are the magical values that I learned about how I could be truthful an artist or a shaman. She did not tell me the lessons but showed me through the example of the way she lived her life. I look introspectively into myself how I have been loudly telling lessons to other people through my political agendas but haven't known and practiced much about just being patient and making things change through examples of my art and life. The media experiments that I did for my thesis project are the passage and ritual to be sensitive and open enough to what we can experience through and learn from our lives. It is how we exchange those experiences and meanings in our societies through media mediation that I want to continue to work. And, in my very wish, the lessons from my grandmother to be truthful, empathetic, and patient are alive and embodied in those experiments.

APPENDIX III

English Poem

Grandma and Her Healing Hands

Grandma, my grandma,
My *mudang* grandma,
A closet shaman in rural Korea.

Touching her neighbours with her hands
Healing them through her hands
Through the skin of her hands
Through their skin with her hands

Breathing out toxins, life-forced pain and hurts
Breathing in nutriments, life-giving herbs, tonics, essences
I follow my breath to her hands
Grasping for hope in her life
Letting go of life for death
Hopes to reach for
Loves to long for

In her hands
With her hands
Through her hands

The force of life is flowing through her hands
Life and death
Lightness and depth
life
touch
breathing

of her hands
of my breathing.

Korean Poem

약손 할매

할매, 할매, 내 할매
촌구석에 숨죽인
벽장
안
무당

손금을 읽었다던가
병든 사람 만졌다던가

이제는 그 모두가 잊은 세월

이제는 할매 더러 무당이라 부를 이 없고
을 할매 서역만리 황천길 가실제
할매 남골묘에 새긴 이름
무당 할매 아니라 김 데레사 였더니

가신 할매 보고프면
우째 그이 불러보까
무당 할매가
김 데레사가

할매, 우리 할매

어린 내 가슴 보듬던
할매 손은 약손, 할매 손은 약손

약사보살을 모셨던가
할매 손은 약손
우리 할매 손은 약손

아픈 데를 만져주랴
슬픈 데를 쓸어주랴
맺힌 데를 풀어주랴

한/숨을 쉬고
한/숨을 뱉고
숨길 따라 흐르고
손길 따라 흐르던

그이를
이제는
어이 불러볼까

김 데레사가
무당 할매가

살고 죽는 천지간이
할매 약손 따라 흘러흘러서

이제는 잊혀진 세월이라도
황천 유랑길 할매 따라 돌아돌아서

어느 세월 아린 가슴 우에
살포시
다시 얹어오소

내 할매
약손 할매
우리 할매요

APPENDIX IV

An ancient Korean poem

공무도하가 (公無渡河歌)

님아, 님아, 내 님아, 그 강 건너지 마오 (公無渡河)
님아, 님아, 내 님아, 그예 물을 건너시네 (公竟渡河)
아, 강물에 휩쓸려 돌아가시니 (墮河而死)
아, 가신 님을 내 어이할꼬 (當奈公河)

Song of the Konghu Zither

(Translation 1)

Love, my love, do not ford that river
For if you do I will be left behind.
Love, my love, do not ford that river, I say,
But you do it anyway.
swept away and drowned!
Love, my lost love, I am left behind
what now can I do?

(Translation 2)

Love, my love, I tried to stay you.
Love, my love, you tried to cross
Love, my love, you were swept away and drowned.
Love, my love, I am all alone.

Stop, love
But you went, love.
Swept away, my love.
And now I am alone.

Stop, love, do not cross.
You went, love, you tried.
The river took you,
Leaving me behind.

(Translation 3)

Love, my love, ford not that river, forsake me not,
Ford not that river, I say, but you ford it anyway
No, no! Swept away and drowned!
Love, my lost love, I am forsaken—what now?

(Translation 4)

Love, my love, ford not that river
Love, my love, you ford that river
Oh no! Swept away and drowned!
Love, my lost love, what now?

Love, do you really mean to cross that river and leave me all alone?
Love, you are really crossing that river and leaving me all alone.
Oh no, you can't swim—come back to me!
Love, you've gone and drowned, and now I'm all alone.

Love, I told you—told you not to ford that river.
You left me, love—left me when you entered that water.
You left me, love—you were swept away and drowned.
Here I am, love—here I am all alone.

To explain the historical context and significance of this poem in ancient Korean literature, the following overview of Korean literature from the Encyclopaedia Britannica is instructive:

> From the earliest times, poetry and music have played an important part in the daily life of the Korean people. This love for song and dance impressed the ancient Chinese, whose observations are found in their early records. Ancient Korean songs, closely allied to the religious life of the people, were performed at such rites as the worship of heaven in the north and the sowing and harvest festivals in the south. These songs were transmitted orally and were thought to have magical properties.
>
> Three songs are handed down in Chinese translation: *Kuji ka* (or *Yong*

singun ka; “Song for Welcoming the Gods,” in the *Samguk yusa*), *Hwangjo ka* (17 BC; “Song of Orioles,” in the *Samguk sagi*), and *Kong mudoha ka* (or *Konghuin*; “A Medley for the Harp,” in the *Haedong yoksa*). The *Kuji ka* is related to the myth of the founding of the Karak state, but it appears to have been a prayer sung at shamanist rituals. Some have interpreted it as being a song of seduction sung by women. The *Hwangjo ka*, attributed to King Yuri, seems to be a fragment of a love song. The hero of *Kong mudoha ka* is thought to have been a shaman who drowned himself while in a trance. Perhaps the poem indicates the loss of the shaman's efficacy and authority when ancient Korea was transformed into a structured state. The story also includes other characters such as the sailor, his wife, and her friend. Another song, the *Tosol ka* (AD 28), is mentioned in the *Samguk sagi* as the beginning of secular poetry, but the poem itself has not survived.

APPENDIX V

MEDIA DOCUMENTATION
Graduation Exhibition Photos and Attached DVD